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A WORKING THEOLOGY

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A WORKING THEOLOGY

BY

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK : : : : : 1909

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Published February, 1909

To

WALTER W. LAW, ESQ.,
OF BRIARCLIFF MANOR, NEW YORK,
IN GRATEFUL RECOLLECTION OF TEN HAPPY
YEARS IN THE COMMUNITY WHICH
HIS GENIUS HAS CONSTRUCTED, AND IN
THE CHURCH WHOSE WALLS HE BUILT, WHOSE
SPIRIT HE CONSTANTLY ENRICHED

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PREFACE

THEOLOGY in its simplest sense is thought about God and man and this wonderful universe. A working theology is a theology that works, one, that is to say, which closely touches life, confirms itself in experience, and issues in power. Its keynotes are reverence and reality.

The theology set forth in these pages is neither complete nor systematic. It leaves many vital questions untouched, great gaps unbridged. The aim has been not so much to fathom the ultimate as to set forth a religious faith which will prove a strong working-basis for everyday life. My hope is that the book may prove useful not only to brother ministers, but to many in our churches who are earnestly seeking a point of contact between the older thought and the new.

MORRISTOWN, N. J.,
February, 1909.

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A WORKING THEOLOGY

I

THE RELIGIOUS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE NEWER CONCEPTIONS OF TRUTH

AT the base of a wise working theology is a frank recognition of the limitations of human knowledge. Our Saviour once, at least, confessed his ignorance; his Church in this, more almost than in anything else, has hesitated to follow him. Great emphasis has been placed upon self-consistent systems of theology which, mainly as a mental gymnastic, have been strong and creative, when men have recognized (as, alas! they have not always), that the truth of God must be infinitely larger than the gropings of men; that spiritual reality can be revealed to men encased in the flesh, gripped by material things, mainly in symbol; that "language is not so much descriptive as it is suggestive, being figurative throughout even when it deals with spiritual truth." * Even in this age men do not

*Horace Bushnell.

hesitate to dash off a theology at a sitting, or to sum up the eternities in an epigram. It is well to remember that a complete creed is always a false creed; for we know in part.

The changes which have come over the religious thinking of men in recent years have been repeatedly set forth. The universe, we are told, is infinitely bigger than men thought it; the world in which we live is infinitely older. Our planet was not made in six literal days by direct creative fiat, but coming no less from God's hand, working out marvellously his will, it grew up through the slow struggle and growth of long ages, from cruder forms of life to higher, until at last man himself came forth, and began his wondrous career of self-discovery and world-conquest. The emphasis of thought has passed from God transcendent, dwelling apart from our world, setting it going, interfering now and then in mercy or in wrath, to God immanent, ever present, ever potent, in every moment, in every method, of its life. There are new views of religious authority; its seat, we are told, is within, not without; in the God-illumined conscience, not in church or book. There is a new psychol-

ogy, which startles us with many a statement about the mystery of personality, but makes easier than ever belief in a spiritual universe, in spiritual forces, and spiritual contact. "Science is trembling upon the verge of something great." So is faith. This might be called an age of transition, save that every progressive age has been so called. "In knowledge," said the humble-minded and godly Faraday, "that man only is to be contemned who is not in a state of transition."

What is the religious attitude toward the newer conceptions of truth? Can we believe that they are simply profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called? Can we believe that the last word about the universe was said centuries ago, and that the later light is darkness? Shall we be of the number of those who fear constantly that something may be discovered which will break down forever the cherished hopes of the ages? This surely is cowardice and the rankest atheism. Or shall we be of those, a great multitude, who, because the mystery is great, give it up, because some pinhead definition fails, give themselves to

eating and drinking and making money? This surely is not only to deny God, but to degrade human life.

The true attitude is that of men of open mind, eager to learn, responsive to every whisper of truth, from whatever source it comes. Largely the business of life is to learn. God has not given us a finished universe whose mission and method are at once clear, but a world in the making, a great kingdom of truth and love in the germ, in which men groping and growing, stumbling and rising again, in that very process are to find themselves and to find their God. Conviction which closes the mind to new light is prejudice, and prejudice is the most fatal form of ignorance.

But, eager to learn, we must be cautious to conclude that the thing that is new is necessarily the thing that is true. In this the leaders of modern science set a good example. The wisest of them still speak of the great principle of growth which has revolutionized the thought of men in the last fifty years as "the evolutionary hypothesis." While there is one missing link the chain is not complete. Again and again the

confident conclusion of to-day has been the exploded fallacy of to-morrow. "That is possible," Louis Pasteur used to say, "but we must look more deeply into the subject." The thoughts of men frequently swing from one extreme to another ere they light upon the central pole of truth.

Again, a humble and reverent spirit is essential to a truly religious attitude. Our men of science feel themselves in the presence of a greatness that is far beyond them. "In ultimate essence," says one of them, "we know absolutely nothing." "Science," says another, "is groping after a definition of life." "The naturalist," says Professor Shaler, "ends always with the sense that the known, however far his knowing may go, must be to that which is to remain undiscovered as one to infinity, as nothing to the whole." The man who feels this will be in no danger of pride of mind, he will be humbled every day in the presence of the infinite greatness of which he is so small a part, his every earnest thought will be an aspiration, his whole life a prayer.

Most of all, the truly religious attitude tow-

ard the newer thought of our time is that of men who have the courage and expectation and broadening vision of a rugged and fearless faith. Upon this point the testimony of history is very suggestive. Some of us can remember the anxious fear with which men watched the experiments of Louis Pasteur and others on the spontaneous generation of life, for, said many, if this be established, the whole structure of Christian faith will topple to destruction. But to-day Christian biologists tell us that even if spontaneous generation should be established, as some of them believe it will, the only effect would be to carry back the evolutionary process one step further; the discovery would not eliminate God, but increase immeasurably the marvel of his method. So there are those to-day who tell us that if the present philosophic tendency toward monism should be established; if it should be shown that the essence of a human life, the things of which it is made, are not two, body and spirit, but one single essence manifesting itself in two sets of phenomena, all hope of the permanence of the individual as a factor in the universe will pass from the thought of

reasonable men. But no. History rings with predictions of the extinction of Christian faith. Voltaire says that in fifty years it will be dead; and in fifty years the very house in which he made the prediction is a depot for the circulation of the Scriptures. "The foundation of God standeth sure." The universe has meaning; it speaks everywhere of infinite thought, of infinite patience, of infinite purpose. "Our souls were made for God, and they are restless until they find him." Long ago, one of humble, self-less spirit, whose earthly life was to human eyes a tragic failure, forsaken by his few friends, crucified upon a tree, dared to say, "Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Is not the past a glorious prophecy of the future? Is it not reasonable to be sure that "the best is yet to be"? Out of his Holy Word, out of the exhaustless storehouses of the natural world, out of the hearts of men growing up into his image, God has yet more light to break forth, more love to radiate, larger life here and hereafter to reveal. "Oh how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee."

II

GOD THE LOVING FATHER; MAN THE ERRING CHILD

A WORKING theology is born of another conscious limitation, the limitation of power, the limitation of moral achievement. The I, groping, stumbling, falling, saying "I will," and living "I won't," misled by its own confidence, starved by its own indulgence, craves somewhere in the universe a Thou, stronger, wiser, purer.

In a working theology, the doctrine of God is summed up in the two words of Jesus, "God is Spirit," and "Your Father and my Father." The one tells us all we can know of his being; the other all we need know of his character.

"God is Spirit"—more akin to the atmosphere we breathe, which no man sees, without which no man lives, than to the physical forms on which we look; more akin to thought which flits hither and thither at will than to the physical brain; to love which is eternal, immortal, invisible, than to the physical heart. "The

wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; *so* is every one that is born of the Spirit." He is the first cause, the final goal of all things, in all life, but above all life. But according to the Scriptures, and according to the rich testimony of experience, God is not a mere vapor, an essence, a force; he has those qualities imperfectly summed up in the word personality—imperfectly, for no word of human speech can fully define him—which make it possible for man to know him, and to love him, and to be like him. The thought of God as a Spirit is ever to be balanced by the thought of God as a Person; he thinks and feels and wills as we do; he has self-consciousness and self-direction. But the thought of God as a Person is ever to be balanced by the thought of God as a Spirit; he has none of our limitations, the limitations of form and space and time. He is everywhere and always and in all things:

> "Centre and soul of every sphere,
> Yet to each loving heart how near."

Jesus teaches us to bring to our thought of God, who is Spirit, one of the sweetest and most

sacred of human names, Father. It may be freely conceded that the word throws no light upon the great mystery of the being and essence of God, and that it is not even a perfect expression of his character. But it is the most satisfying of all resting-places for the mind and heart as they seek after the Infinite. It has often been said that men made in the image of God have made God in the image of man. This is true; it has often been unfortunate, but in some degree it is necessary. We cannot conceive God save in the terms of our own thought, and in the language of our own life. It is at this point that many of the positions of the recent "new theology" in England break down as parts of a working theology. When we tell men that because of the essential oneness of God and man and the solidarity of humanity you are I, and I am you, and we are both God; or that it is impossible to conceive of anything in the universe outside of God,* that which we say may

*There must be a region of experience where we shall find that you and I are one. . . . My God is my deeper Self and yours too. . . . How can there be anything in the universe outside of God?"—"The New Theology," R. J. Campbell, pp. 34, 35 and 18.

be true in the terms of some man's philosophy, but to the men in our churches it is nonsense, it rings false to experience, it is the offering of a stone to men hungry for bread, and has, therefore, no place in a working theology. But when we tell them that the Infinite Spirit who is in all life and above it—its source, its strength, its goal—has toward every man the thought and purpose and energy of a father, we give them a truth beneath whose spreading folds every experience of life may be interpreted.

God, then, in a working theology, is Infinite Life and Love in all life regnant. Jesus Christ is Infinite Life and Love manifest. A working theology concerns itself little with defining Christ; he baffles, surmounts all definition. Always definitions divide men; simple loyalties unite them. "Every definition," said Erasmus, "is a misfortune." It is a commonplace that the controversies of the ages have, in the main, been controversies about words. Deity, divinity, humanity, are after all but words in which man concretes his ignorance, mere direction-points in the seekings of the centuries. What deity is in its essence, what humanity is, what

in our Master was divine, what human, no man can know until he knows what spirit is, and what matter is, and what, in its essence, life is; and no man knows any of these things to-day. As men beheld the Christ, they said, If God has an only begotten Son, this must indeed be he.* But is not even this sacred word of the ages an accommodation to human thought? Must not the relation of God and of Jesus Christ be too spiritual, too complete, to be perfectly expressed in the terminology of any human relation? My own Christology—a very simple and satisfying one—is summed up in the Master's word, "I am the Way"; in the face, in the life, in the death of Jesus Christ, I see God. "If ye knew me," he said, "ye would know my Father also." We know a man not when we know his visible form—we see men every day we do not know—we know a man when we know his mind and heart and spirit. The humblest man who knows Jesus Christ, who is trying every day to learn of him, keeping his words, seeking his spirit, doing his work, knows

* We beheld his glory, the glory *as* of the only begotten from the Father. John 1, 14.

more about God than all the wisdom of science and philosophy and theology can teach him. As I learn more of him, I find myself saying of him, not at all as the last word of a dogma, but as the utterance of a great love and a soul-satisfying devotion, "My Lord and my God."

Jesus Christ is God visible to man; God expressed in the form, speaking the language, doing the work of a human life. The Holy Spirit is God vital in man. The great word of a working theology is power; its gospel that the weakness of man may assimilate the strength of God; that in every struggle of the soul outward and upward, the infinite resources of the universe may be his. And they are needed. For in a strong working theology sin is very real and very terrible. It is no amiable weakness, no unfortunate tendency, no blundering quest after God. The depreciation of sin is the emasculation of religion. It is true that sin is selfishness, the assertion of the unit against the whole; that punishment is from within, the normal fruit of sin, essential not arbitrary; that hell is the remorse of the soul localized. There is no new theology in this; one finds most of it in William

Law in the early eighteenth century. But when we are told that "sin has never injured God except through man" * a note is struck which is out of tune with every human analogy. The boy who grows up to wrong his fellow-creature hurts his own father even more. The great utterance of Calvary is that the heart of God is rent and torn with the sin and selfishness of men; that God is injured, not in anger, not wholly in that wrath which is the recoil of the pure from the foul, not because the cosmic process has gone wrong; but in the anguish and bitter disappointment and great love of a Father's breaking heart. The very essence of Christianity is the personal relation of God the Father and man the child; we can never emphasize overmuch not only the blindness, the folly, the self-defeat of sin, but the great wrong it does to a Father's love. It is the manifestation of the love of God that has won the best in men through the ages, and will to the end.

*"The New Theology," R. J. Campbell, p. 52.

III

DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN THE PLAY OF COSMIC PROCESSES

GREAT emphasis is placed in a working theology upon Divine Providence. By the term is meant the guidance in all life of an Infinite and beneficent Power, the slow, sure working of a Plan, alike in the ages of history, in the destiny of nations, and in the experiences of individual men. This plan embraces in its majestic sweep no less the indifference, the folly, the antagonism of men than their devotion and aspiration and achievement; ever unfolding, it is never complete; often hidden, it is never dormant, and never wholly fails. Wordsworth beautifully expresses the thought in its more personal application in lines which Gladstone used to quote:

> One adequate support
> For the calamities of mortal life
> Exists—one only: an assured belief
> That the procession of our fate, howe'er
> Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
> Of infinite benevolence and power
> Whose everlasting purposes embrace
> All accidents, converting them to good.

Huxley showed that he was in sympathy with this great conception (though he declared the evidence accessible to be wholly insufficient to warrant either a positive or a negative conclusion) when he wrote: "If the doctrine of Providence is to be taken as the expression 'in a way to be understanded of the people' of the total exclusion of chance from a place even in the most insignificant corner of nature; if it means the strong conviction that the cosmic process is rational and the faith that throughout all duration unbroken order has reigned in the universe, I not only accept it, but I am disposed to think it the most important of all truths. As it is of more consequence for a citizen to know the law than to be personally acquainted with the features of those who will surely carry it into effect, so this very positive doctrine of Providence, in the sense defined, seems to me far more important than all the theorems of speculative theology. If, further, the doctrine is held to imply that in some indefinitely remote past æon, the cosmic process was set going by some entity possessed of intelligence and foresight, similar to our own in kind, how-

ever superior in degree; if consequently it is held that every event, not merely in our planetary speck, but in untold millions of other worlds, was foreknown before the worlds were, scientific thought, so far as I know anything about it, has nothing to say against that hypothesis. It is in fact an anthropomorphic rendering of the doctrine of evolution." *

What light does modern thought throw upon the working of Divine Providence, not only in starting off the process in long æons past, and foreknowing its every issue, but in shaping its smallest detail to-day?

(1) Modern thought magnifies beyond human grasp the sphere of the Divine activity. Truly in our Father's house are many dwelling-places. Men have grown up slowly toward, they are far from attaining yet, a fit conception of the omnipresence, the vast universal interest and energy of God. The God of the Hebrews was a tribal God; he was their God, the one true God; but his interests were local, his efforts confined to a limited area, narrowed by antipathies and resentments like their own. The most

*Huxley's Life and Letters," Vol. II, p. 320.

difficult thing for Israel to learn was that God cared at all for the foreigner. The tendency of men always has been to assume a monopoly of the plan and the care of God. In his name and for his glory the nations have gone forth to kill one another, each claiming his aid, confident of his approval, forgetful as a rule that God so loved *the world*, that his interests are vast and deep as the sweep of human need. And to-day, we who take the wider view, who are growing up slowly into a world-consciousness, who realize that God's thought and purpose embrace the distant nations and the alien races, are apt to forget that the earth, to us so vast, is but a speck in the dominions of the Eternal, that whether or not these distant realms, whose number no man can count, whose dimensions no man can conceive, whose distance from us surpasses estimate, be peopled with beings in any way like us, we are bound to them by the kinship of a common creation and a common care; their wondrous secret is the present thought of God, their progress his toil, there as here God is and God works. What new meaning the thought gives to the word of Jesus, "My Father

worketh hitherto." Who can ponder the vast expanse of the divine thought and toil, and not be impressed anew with the marvel and mystery of the universe, and the infinite greatness of Him from whom it comes, whose will it wondrously fulfils? Who in the presence of such a greatness does not feel humbled, is not ready to say with Washington Irving that the efforts of man to comprehend Divine Providence —to set limits to them, and say, This thou canst do, that never—are "like the efforts of the little blind mole running his tiny tunnels underground to comprehend the marching and countermarching of armies overhead."

(2) But modern thought about the universe makes easier a reasonable faith in the Providence of God. Men who thought of God as dwelling in physical form on a great throne in distant spaces thought less consistently of his daily contact with all human life; but men who begin to realize something of what is meant by the sublime statement that God is Spirit, who feel increasingly the reality of the spiritual universe, find it ever easier to believe that he who is great enough to be the God of the infinite

spaces is ever present in the life of the world and the lives of his children. And if present, then potent. It is impossible to conceive of God simply as a presence, a mere vapor, inert, passive. Where God is, he achieves.

But here arise some difficulties which perplex many an earnest mind. One asks, does not modern thought reveal to us a great realm of order in which laws, fixed, relentless, work out their sure results; where, in a universe of law, is the place of a benign Providence? The answer, of course, is that law and Providence are never to be conceived of as antagonistic, that "the course of nature is itself providential," the relation of cause and effect, like the unfailing sequence of the seasons, a part of the kindness of this scheme of things, through which man may know himself and the world around him, and shape his life, and do his work, with confidence. All law is love; all love is law. "The very etymology of the word," it has well been said, "should have taught us that Providence is not afterthought, but forethought, foreseeing and consequent foreordaining, not the tinkering of a machine so clumsily constructed that its

working fails to accomplish its designed purpose, the shoving backward or forward of a clock which fails to keep good time, but the orderly working of infinite wisdom, whose eternal plans need no modification because perfect always." *

But what of special providences? If by special providences we mean that universal laws are ever interfered with for the benefit of the individual, no such conception can prevail in this age. But if we mean that for each man as for all men the course of nature is providential; if we mean, with Horace Bushnell, that every man's life is a plan of God, this is a thought as essential to any just conception of the majesty of God, as it is precious to the heart of man. Here, of course, some find difficulty. "The God whom science recognizes," we are told, "must be a God of universal laws exclusively, a God who does a wholesale, not a retail business. He cannot accommodate his processes to the convenience of individuals." †

* "Christian Faith in an Age of Science," by Dr. William North Rice, p. 338.

† "Varieties of Religious Experience," p. 496. The quotation does not, however, express Professor James' own view.

But this is to place human limitations to the work of God; it is to materialize and localize him, and assume that because a thing is difficult for man to conceive, it is impossible for God to achieve. Depend upon it, the Lord God Almighty does thorough work; in the greatness of his toils he does not let detail escape him. "To the Infinite Intelligence, *all* and *each* are alike present. God does not forget details in generalizations, nor lose generalizations in details." *

But where in a human life is the sphere of Providence? If my life is a plan of God, mapped out before I was born, where do I come in? This is the problem, old as the gropings of the human mind, of freewill and foreordination. The answer that appeals alike to mind and heart is that God in the exercise of his Divine sovereignty and love, for the achievement of his great creative ends, has given to man the sublime gift of choice, the image of the Divine within him; that even God cannot compel the choices of a free being; that the plan of a man's life is not mapped out beyond his choices once long ago

* Dr. Rice.

by a distant Power, but that the great Planner is ever with us renewing, reshaping the Plan, out of our false choices making for us fresh opportunities, with wondrous patience working out the purposes we have long resisted, bringing the scattered ends of life into a glorious unity, saying to us with every dawning day, "Behold, I make all things new."

That there is the least reality in such a view, no amount of argument will ever convince. The testimony of experience alone is sure and strong. There are men whose testimony on other things the world trusts implicitly whose most confident conviction is that God is with them. They are amazed and startled often by the evidences of his presence, by the unfolding in their lives of a plan far beyond their own. Mysterious helps come to them; strange guidances point the way; they seem to feel in all life the touch of a Hand, to hear the whisper of a still small voice. Where others speak of coincidences, they speak of God, and echo gratefully the Psalmist's words, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me."

But what of those whose lives give no such testimony? Two things are to be remembered.

(*a*) Divine Providence is never to be associated only with strange guidances, mysterious helps, marvellous coincidences. It may be associated no less with great disappointments, sudden shocks of sorrow, dread perplexities, awful defeats. Of some of the great deliverances of life we say sometimes, Things were at their very worst, all was darkness and despair, when suddenly a way was wonderfully opened up, a great light flashed upon the horizon, and we felt that God's hand was in it. But no less truly might we say when blow after blow falls suddenly in a dozen directions, and the life that seemed joyous and confident is rent with anguish or blighted with defeat, This, too, is God's hand, driving us into the wilderness, this, too, his voice, saying, "Quit you like men, be strong; my face may be hidden, but I will never leave you nor forsake you." A great soul of old was called wonderfully out of the darkness of blunder and folly into the sunshine of faith and hope. As he puzzled out his new life-problem, a messenger of God was sent to him, and this was the message, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

There was no room for the Saviour of the world at his birth; he went by a lonely and thorny way to a cross. Life as God plans it is never to be identified with the life of ease and prosperity; the gathering storm is in it no less than the clearing path.

(*b*) There is rich suggestion in the remark of R. H. Hutton that God's providences work largely in the sphere of the choices. "The minds that are alive to every word from God, give constant opportunity for his divine interference with a suggestion that may alter the course of their lives; and like the ship which turns when the steersman's hand but touches the wheel, God can steer them through the worst dangers by the faintest breath of feeling, or the lightest touch of thought." * This is the old word of the Psalmist: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him"; it is the word of Jesus, "He that wills to do God's will shall know." The man who resolutely chooses God's will finds it ever more perfectly; the life which is eagerly sensitive to the divine touch feels and follows that touch ever more confidently.

* "Theological Essays," p. 81.

IV

PRAYER IN A WORLD OF LAW

WHAT is the place of prayer in the life of the man who feels himself to be living in a great universe of law in which, with unchanging order, the same causes or combinations of causes always produce the same effects? At once, of course, we have to rid ourselves of the thought that prayer is in any degree antagonistic to law. Men have been wont to think of themselves as living in the presence of two great classes of phenomena, the natural, the common order, the expected sequence of events, and the supernatural, the abnormal, the prodigious. In his government of the universe God, it has been assumed, has detailed certain work to subordinates called laws; but ever and anon they fail of their purpose, they get things all mixed up, they rend and tear the hearts of men, and so, in response to his children's cry, God sets them aside, and steps himself into the fray. Now modern thought about the universe, and the In-

finite Spirit who in it is ever-present, ever-potent, conceives all this very differently. It is not that the reality of the phenomena commonly classed as supernatural is for a moment questioned—those inexplicable happenings, those providential guidances, those remarkable answers to prayer. Far from it. Rather is their sphere broadened, and their foundation deepened and strengthened. But the conception of two antagonistic methods in the universe—law and Providence, nature and the supernatural—is dismissed. We begin to see that the course of nature is itself providential, that law is love, that the supernatural is not the abnormal but the supernormal, the higher-natural; those perfectly natural self-expressions of the Infinite Spirit of Life which the mind of man groping dimly toward the light is as yet too blind to conceive.

There follows at once from this a different conception of the spirit, the atmosphere, of prayer from that which men have sometimes held. True prayer does not ask God to set aside his laws, to interfere with the normal sequence of events. There is a striking definition in one

of the novels of George Meredith which goes to the very heart of the matter. "Prayer," he says, "is the recognition of law." That is true. At the heart of all true prayer is the assent of the soul to the unbroken order of the universe, its sublimest utterance, "Thy will be done." Have you noticed the habitual recognition of law in the sayings of Jesus about prayer? "If" is the keynote of these sayings. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain, *that* whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name he may give it to you." "He that believeth on me, whatsoever he shall ask in my name, that will I do." That is to say, if my spirit is in you, if in you my words have become flesh, the very longings of God will be yours, and they cannot fail. The life whose passion it is to bear fruit, to push on somewhere the great work of God, will ask the things which God is far more eager to give. "Prayer," says Dr. George Albert Coe, "is the process of identifying our

will and whatever effectiveness we may have in the world with the will and work of God." "The reason," said Henry Drummond, "why so many people get nothing from prayer is that they expect effects without causes, and this is also the reason why they give it up. True prayer for any promise is to plead for power to fulfil the condition on which it is offered and which being fulfilled it is in that act given." A man never prays until at the heart of his prayer is the assent of his soul to the unbroken order of the universe, the desire that he may take the place in it God means for him humbly, bravely, completely, the longing that in his life God's will may be wholly done. Prayer is the recognition of law.

But does not this conception limit greatly the scope of prayer? It does limit somewhat the scope of our asking, but it immeasurably extends the range of our receiving. The man who has such a thought of prayer as this cannot ask God to set aside the order of the universe for his convenience, or to save him from the effects of his own folly. For this reason Charles Kingsley refused to pray for the stay of the cholera

epidemic in his time; it was the effect of men's filth and indolence, and they should take the consequences. Many a man has gone to his knees when he should have gone to the axe and the disinfectant. The man who has such a thought of prayer cannot argue with God in prayer, try to convince him that he is wrong, counsel him confidently as to the conduct of the universe or of a human life. Such prayer is "teasing, not trusting." But how vastly the higher thought of prayer expands the range of our receiving, for it brings us into touch with the interests, not of one or two human lives alone, but of all, not with our own poor plans alone, but with God's, it makes the achievement of his work, the progress of his kingdom, and not the getting of bread for our own hungry lives, the ever-broadening interest, the ever-deepening longing of our hearts. And is it not just this which many a man's life needs above all else—not the fulfilment of this petty plan and that—but a broadening interest, a larger outlook, a real grip upon the universal sympathy and interest of God in Christ?

It may be asked, is there not in this thought

of prayer a limitation larger than any which has yet been mentioned? If we are living in a universe of unbroken order, if causes always produce effects, if God cannot be expected to change his plan to please us, why pray at all? Did not Jesus say, "Your Father knoweth what ye have need of before ye ask him"? Yes, but he also said, "When ye pray, say, our Father," and the greatest of all his followers said, "Never cease to pray." But why? For answer, I might remind you of the great limitations of our knowledge, of our weakness, our sense of need, our longing many a day for strength, for guidance beyond our own. Shall not this passionate hunger of the soul find utterance? I might call the roll of the mighty men of achievement who have also been men of prayer—Gladstone, with his unfailing morning hour, saying to his intimates in the hour of political crisis, "What we need is more prayer, more prayer"; Chinese Gordon, with the white handkerchief before his tent which told that then he must be undisturbed; Wesley, of whom it was said that he was much in the upper room; Matthew Henry, confessing, "I forgot to ask special prayer on

the day's work, and so the chariot wheels drove heavily." I might speak of the great institutions, such as those of Muller and Barnardo and Quarrier, which have been built up on and sustained by prayer. I might quote such a testimony to prayer, from the standpoint of the scientific psychologist, as that of the late F. W. H. Myers. A friend wrote asking him what, candidly, he thought about prayer, and this is what he says: "I am glad you have asked me about prayer, because I have rather strong ideas about the subject. First, consider what are the facts. There exists around us a spiritual universe, and that universe is in actual relation with the material. From the spiritual universe comes the energy which maintains the material, the energy which makes the life of each individual spirit. Our spirits are supported by a perpetual indrawal of energy, and the vigor of that indrawal is perpetually changing, much as the vigor of our absorption of material nutriment changes from hour to hour. I call these facts because I think that some scheme of this kind is the only one consistent with our actual evidence. How, then, should we act on these facts?

Plainly we must endeavor to draw in as much spiritual life as possible, and we must place our minds in any attitude which experience shows to be favorable to such indrawal. Prayer is the general name for the attitude of open and earnest expectancy; it is not a purely subjective thing; in it spiritual power or grace flows in from the infinite spiritual world."

But the best answer I know to the question, why pray?, the answer which never fails to satisfy the man who has made it his own, is this: Prayer is not simply the recognition of law; prayer is the recognition of love, the love that is in all law, the love that is in all life. The secret of all true prayer, the unfailing rule for its exercise and interpretation, was given by Jesus when he said, "When ye pray, say our Father." We fathers know what is good for our children much better than they do, why should they presume to tell us? A sad day it would be for all of us when our children ceased to come running to us with their childish wants and troubles, which are often so very foolish, for their coming is the expression of the love which is our very life, and of the trust which is our joy. And so,

when the cannibal chief, of whom James Chalmers tells us, prays "We much want tobacco, calico, and tomahawks and knives," I am sure it pleases God even as it pleases us, for it is the foolish child coming to his wise Father, and by and by, coming often to that Father, he will know better what to ask. And when the child of whom Dr. George A. Coe tells us, seeing a storm coming that will stop his play, kneels upon the lawn and prays that it may not rain, it is prayer, for it is the child coming to his Father, the child making the truly Christian assumption that God is interested in the games of childhood. And when the farmer prays for rain for his wheatfield, though the order of nature is unchanged by his words, still this is prayer, for by it the man assumes a relation of conscious dependence and trust toward God, and by bringing his daily occupation to God attains to something greater than wheat.* I must come to God with my poor little human prayers because he is my Father and I am his child, and if I do not speak to him, nor he to me, the sweet relation is lost. He is no more my Father, nor I his child.

* See Dr. Coe's "Religion of a Mature Mind," p. 357.

And I may ask him for anything I like, because he is my Father, but coming to him often I learn, as our children soon learn with us, that there are many things it is useless to ask, that the things best for me are the things my loving Father longs to give; that the best prayer is prayer that I may know what these are, and desire them above all, and love and trust him more and more. For the best prayer is not asking for things, it is the quiet, creative hour when the child is alone with his Father, seeking his guidance, receiving his strength, resting in his infinite love.

And yet this is not the last word about prayer. The most Christlike prayer is prayer for others, that God's will may be done in them, that in the world they may be kept from the stain of the world, that they may be comforted in sorrow, upheld in toil, guided into the fullest fruition of their lives. Such prayer is not simply the normal utterance of Christian faith and love; it achieves wondrous results; in it space is annihilated, and soul touches soul. Devout men have always believed this. Many a man has felt around him all his life an impelling, restraining

influence which he has ascribed to his mother's prayers; in moments of moral peril he has felt himself arrested as by an unseen hand. The great missionary movement has been built up largely upon the prayers of the faithful.

> "Away in foreign fields they wondered how
> Their simple word had power;
> At home the Christians, two or three,
> Had met to pray an hour."

To-day modern conceptions alike of the universe and of the individual make easier the faith that such prayer is a positive force. True, we are just reaching the first outlook upon an unknown country; what wonders are beyond no man knows. But the glimpses already opening to the vision—the self beneath the sphere of consciousness where some tell us spirit has its meeting-place with spirit, and God with man; the new emphasis upon mental suggestion in healing diseases alike of the body and the mind; the reality of telepathic communication, which is probably the one thing thus far fully established by psychic research—all these aid the belief that when I pray for my friend I am touching him with spiritual energy; when I

suggest to him, even if he be distant from me, that he *can* conquer his weakness, that he *can* rise above his sorrow, that all things *are* possible to him that believeth, I am helping to bring spiritual forces at least within his reach, I am pleading for that very faith which the Master always required ere his love wrought its wondrous work. There is no peril in this of what some may call a mere naturalism, the apparent identification of God with the forces of the universe and the latent resources of the human spirit. The man who is most keenly conscious of the spiritual energies around and within him, most eager to be a channel through which they may work, will never lose in them the Infinite Spirit of Life who is great enough to have brought them into being; as he seeks to awaken the latent resources of his own and his brother's spirit, he will realize gratefully that by far the greatest of these resources, from which none that is strong and sure can ever for a moment be separated, is God himself in the human soul.

To many a Christian the offering of prayer "through Jesus Christ" is no formal use of an empty phrase. He so prays because he sees God

in the face of Jesus Christ, because Jesus has led him into a new understanding of the meaning and the power of prayer; most of all it is his thought that his prayer should pass through the very heart of Christ up to the Infinite and out to his brother, because he realizes that the prayer that is purified by the Master's spirit of self-surrender, of obedience, of perfect love, unites itself with the Divine will and is bound to triumph.

Such a conception of prayer as this of course leaves many unanswered questions. But that by prayer life is linked with life, the might of God with the weakness of man, is in these days a reasonable and a great working faith.

V

MIRACLES IN A SCIENTIFIC AGE

IN a credulous age, miracles were the foremost evidence of Christianity; to-day, to many minds, they are among the greatest of religious difficulties, while others dismiss them wholly from their thought. "There is nothing," says Matthew Arnold, "one would more desire for a person or a doctrine one greatly values than to make them independent of miracle."

What is a miracle? In the simplest sense of the word, a miracle is a wonder, a wonderful thing, that is all. In the restricted sense in which we commonly use the word, a miracle is a departure from the known laws of nature, a startling deviation from the common sequence of events. From this definition two things follow: (1) Miracle is not necessarily a departure from law, but from known law; it is not necessarily an interference with the order of the universe, but the calling in of a higher law. With this view it is possible to define a miracle accurately as "a divine restoration of the true

order of nature." * (2) The miracle of yesterday is the commonplace of to-day. Had I told a friend fifty years ago that, sitting in my study, I had that day talked with a man a hundred miles away, or that I had just heard from a friend in midocean, I would have been deemed untruthful, insane, or a worker of miracles; but to-day the statement awakens no surprise.

Let it be clear, then, that in the light of modern knowledge of the universe, there is no difficulty about miracles simply on account of their marvellousness. In epoch-making words Huxley made this very clear: "Whoso clearly appreciates all that is implied in the falling of a stone can have no difficulty about any doctrine simply on account of its marvellousness." "I am too much a believer with Butler that there is no absurdity in theology so great that you cannot parallel it by a far greater absurdity of Nature to have any difficulty about miracles." And again, "Science offers us much greater marvels than the miracles of theology, only the evidence for them is very different." † "Sci-

* Stearns, "Present Day Theology," p. 63.
† Huxley's "Life and Letters," vol. 1, 211, 227, etc.

ence," says a recent writer, "recognizes no miracle because all the world has become miraculous." *

So much for the possibility of miracle. In the presence of the infinite vastness of the phenomena with which he deals, the observer of reverent spirit stands humbled, feels profoundly the limitation of his knowledge, and hesitates to say of any wonderful thing, It could not be. It is needless to assume that the processes of nature as he who made them knows them, are so clumsy and ineffective that he has ever to go beyond them to effect his ends. But on the other hand, it is alike presumptuous and illogical to assume that in the common order of the universe as known to men, the Infinite Spirit has exhausted his resources; sane and reasonable is it rather to believe that the latent forces which man is gradually finding and making his own are but a few of the infinite powers of the exhaustless power of God.

The real question is not, are miracles possible, but have miracles happened? Was the

* "Christian Theology in Outline," William Adams Brown, p. 228.

advent of Christianity heralded and accompanied by the working of inexplicable wonders? Now, there are two avenues of approach to this question. One is to go to Christ through the miracles, because of them to believe in him. The other method is to go to the miracles through Christ, because of him to look at them. The first method no longer appeals to our age. We recall at once that the earthly life of Jesus was lived in a credulous, unscientific age, in which the air was peopled with ghosts and demons, and the more marvellous a thing was the more ready men were to believe it. We recall that all religions, and especially the lives of their founders and great leaders, have been associated with stories of wonder-working. We recall that some of the records of the Old Testament miracles were written centuries after the events they describe, and that a large legendary element may have entered into them; and that even the New Testament stories may well have been embellished by tradition ere they were written down for ages to come. In a word, this method quickly brings us into a fog of uncertainty and doubt.

Take, then, the other method. But first, in

deference to our pride of mind, let us make sincerely the effort to banish the miraculous from Christian faith, and see where it issues. Must we not begin at one sweep with the character of Jesus, for he is himself the greatest of his miracles? The noblest souls of the ages, as they bowed before God, have felt ever the great gulf that separated them from the Infinite; they have felt keenly their sinfulness and unworthiness. But here is One, humble in spirit, selfless in life, the sanest soul of the centuries, who dares to say, "I do always the things that please him," "I and the Father are one"; and after nineteen centuries of research and criticism the testimony of the ages is that of Pilate of old, "We find in him no fault." In kindred words this testimony was given by Matthew Arnold, who will not be classed commonly as an orthodox Christian, "Jesus himself is an absolute; we cannot explain him; he is the perfection of an ideal." If the miraculous goes, the character of Jesus, the ideal of the centuries, is a delusion, for it is an interference with the common order, it is wholly beyond the experience that leaves him out. And of course his resurrection goes. It is

one of the best-attested facts of human history. It is impossible, without it, to conceive what changed those blind, timid, self-seeking friends of his into strong, resourceful apostles, men with a message ever clear, ready to suffer, ready any day to die for it, and for him. It is impossible, without it, to account intelligently for the survival of Christianity. "If Christ be not risen your faith is vain." But if the miraculous goes, the resurrection goes. And this is but the beginning. All the most cherished convictions of Christian faith—the Divine guidance of individual lives, the reality and the worth of prayer —are, as far as man's knowledge of the processes of nature goes, miraculous; they are beyond the common order, a departure from known law. What is left? "Let us eat and drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die."

Rather let us begin with Jesus. What do we find? The Master is no mere wonder-worker, playing with infinite powers, "omnipotence let loose." Urged again and again to do some showy trick that men might be sure of his claims—to leap from the temple roof upon the pavement beneath, to make stones into bread,

to give a sign of some kind—he declines, saying: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." He manifests no pride in his works, ascribes them all to God, tells men if they can but lay hold on God they can do all these things, and greater, too. "The Father that dwelleth in me he doeth the works," "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do." True, at times he appeals to the works as an evidence of his mission, as when, to comfort his discouraged forerunner, he said, "Go tell John what things ye have seen and heard: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up." But this is not their purpose; they are not mere wonders, but works, the outflow of divine sympathy in the presence of human suffering and need. His miracles are a consistent part of his redemptive work, the fitting expression of his love; when we read of him at the wedding feast in Cana, in the home of the centurion, by the bier of the widow's son, we feel a perfect sense of harmony between the man and the work; the heart responds, "It was just like him."

But this is the Christ of history. What of the Christ of experience? I know intimately a man who for years was a victim of the liquor habit. He drank degradation to the dregs. The habit cost him friends, position, health, all on earth but a mother's love and a mother's prayers. Again and again he tried to reform, again and again sadly failed. Child of a cultured home, this man, tottering in limb, shattered in spirit, drifted one day for food and lodging into a rescue home. A Christ-guided hand was laid upon him. "Do you really want to reform?" said the stranger. "I do, but it's no use." "Have you ever asked Christ to help you?" "I have not." They spoke of Christ, they knelt and prayed, the stranger first and then the poor weak man. In that hour he received not simply new purpose—that he had often had before—but cleansing power. "My appetite was taken away," he says; "I have never since wanted to drink." If this be true, and he is a very sane fellow, who for years now has given his leisure to work for men who are as he was, it was a miracle as wonderful as any of the wonders of Scripture. Another man was for years bowed to the dust by

a great sorrow; duty only deadened it; friends were kind and sympathetic, but, ah, they did not understand; now he has learned habitually to look to Christ, to think of him, to pray to him; somehow the look always brings courage and a new hope; his smile returns, his step brightens, his heart can find a song—he does not wonder at the miracles. Another lived only to get; to this end every effort of his life went forth; it meant incessant struggle, restless fear, bitter enmity, a prize ever sought and never found. Then he learned of Christ to give, a very simple change—new direction in life, a different way; but so marvellous the change it has wrought in the whole sweep of his life and in his own heart that to him all the wonder-working of old seems but a poor outward thing compared to the miracle that has been wrought of Christ in him.

So is it ever. Begin sincerely with Christ, and all else in this world of mystery begins to have upon it the morning light. Of course, in face of the miracles of old, the Christian will not silence his thinking function, or accept anything because it is associated with the name of Jesus. He will not be blind to the human element in the

Scriptures; he will not forget the wealth of Oriental imagery and symbolism, so unlike our matter-of-fact Western forms of speech. But as he is led of Christ into the greatness of the Divine Plan and the marvel of the Divine Love, it will seem to him ever less strange that in that crude age when first the law was given, by strange signs the Divine presence was attested; or that when first the prophets spoke, by deeds as well as by words men were summoned to hear; or, most of all, that when the great Revelation of Love was given, when at last a human life perfectly responded to the will and fully did the work of God, in his presence latent forces of the universe sprang into action, and all nature felt upon it the touch of a Master hand.

In a working theology, the test of the miracles is a very simple one. The miracles that seem to the Christian to be like Christ, outpourings of his love, manifestations of his spirit, he will gratefully accept, and love to read about; those that seem to him unlike the Master, trivial, arbitrary, the will put unhesitatingly from his thought, awaiting upon them the light of a clearer day. The counsel of the old Scotch

preacher, "Let us look the difficulty in the face, and pass on," was very wise, a frank recognition of comparative values, a refusal to discredit the sunlight because for the moment some pinhead obstruction blinds the eyes.

VI

THE BIBLE IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN REVELATION AND INSPIRATION

THERE has been suggested constantly in these chapters the new dignity of the natural. Of old, men were apt to think of God as active mainly in the abnormal, the occasional, the supernatural. Jonathan Edwards used to open his windows in a thunder-storm; the atmosphere was so full of God, he said. To-day we begin to realize that God is at work in every blade of grass as in the earthquake and the thunderbolt, in the commonplaces of life as in its crises; that the laws of nature, being his workmanship, cannot well be the clumsy and ineffective weapons of his will, requiring periodically to be superseded, which men have sometimes supposed; that the supernatural so-called is simply the supernormal, the higher-natural, those perfectly natural self-expressions of the Infinite Spirit which the mind of man, struggling toward the truth, is as yet too dull to understand.

Now nowhere is the new dignity of the natural more manifest than in our modern thought about the Bible. Many devout Christians have been much troubled by the newer teaching; it has seemed to them that the authority of the Scriptures was questioned, their truthfulness impeached, their value denied. But to-day we are coming to see that the sum of the best modern thought about the Bible is this, that the Bible is an infinitely more natural book than men have sometimes thought it, and for this very reason a far more precious and powerful book than otherwise in these days it could be. It is not that there is less of God in the Bible, but that his methods here are seen to be more like what he has been teaching men of his methods everywhere.

How natural, for instance, was the origin of the Bible as the Bible itself reveals it. Had men claimed always for the Bible only what it claims for itself, much harmful controversy would have been saved. Needless to say, the book was never dropped from heaven complete; it grew up out of the life of a race chosen of God for great service, the expression of all that was best

in their history, their biography, their literature, their poetry, their preaching, their legislation. In very early days one writer from his standpoint, and another from his, but both with a strong religious interest, gathered together certain traditions long current not only in Israel, but in Babylonia and elsewhere, as to the beginnings of human history; a later writer gathered these writings into one without attempting to harmonize them, and our book of Genesis—the wonderful book of Beginnings—came into being. Exodus is the history of the dramatic exodus of Israel from Egypt. Leviticus is the lawbook of the nation. Psalms, on which the devout spirits of the ages have been nourished, was, with its appendix the book of Lamentations, the hymn- and prayer-book of the Jewish community. Proverbs is a collection of the sayings of the sages, the wise men who were in every village, whose successors sought out the infant Jesus, the counsellors of the people, men with a genius for summing up truth in a sentence.. A certain prophet of God, unable longer to reach his audience, receives a command to write the things that are throbbing in his soul; and one

of the great books of the prophets is written. An ancient philosopher faces the great problem of the ages, why the good suffer with the wicked; in dramatic form he weaves his thought around a well-known story probably much older than his time, and the result is the book of Job, the great epic of the human soul. Gradually these books, and others, written some of them centuries apart, were gathered together, and the Bible as Jesus knew and loved it, the cream of the sacred literature of his race, had taken its place in human history.

Quite as natural, and much more easy to trace, is the origin of the New Testament as the New Testament itself reveals it. The heart of Paul, the great missionary apostle, goes out to the little bands of converts, and the struggling churches, he has left all along the line of his progress; driven by persecution from their cities, he cannot go to see them; but he can write, and he does; out of a full heart, out of a glowing mind, out of a great experience, he pours out to them his inmost soul on the great themes of life and destiny, on the greatest theme, Jesus Christ; in words he never thought would live after him,

in words born of the immediate needs of the men to whom he wrote, in words born of his great love. To-day these letters of Paul, dictated most of them to an amanuensis, with a brief postscript sometimes in his own hand, for he was half-blind—"See with what large characters I have written to you"—constitute about one-half of the New Testament; and upon them the religious thinking of the centuries has been largely built. Luke, the physician, has a friend Theophilus—"loved of God"—who is also dearly loved of Luke. He is eager, he tells us, that Theophilus should have full knowledge of Jesus's life and words, and a firm basis for the faith that is in him; so "having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first," he writes them down in order, and the book he wrote for Theophilus is our Gospel of Luke, without which the world would never have known the parable of the prodigal son. Later he carried the story on to the beginnings of Christian history, again for the sake of Theophilus, and the book of Acts is the result. Just as Robertson of Brighton, his biographer tells us, wrote out his sermons after they had been preached, for the sake of a single

friend whom he thought they might help, and the labor of love thus done by Robertson for his friend has been used of God to mould the religious thinking of the world as have no other English sermons for a century. As the days passed, these books and others—gospels, letters, poetic visions—came to be read in the meetings of the early Christians for their comfort and instruction; they became a vital part of the church's life; and after a time the church, in the exercise of its wisdom, and ever seeking the Divine guidance, chose the best of them, gathered them together, and the New Testament was wedded to the Old. How natural the origin of the Bible as the Bible itself reveals it!

And then how natural and human are the books thus in this wonderfully natural way given to the world. No claim to a miraculous infallibility is made; no claim that the Spirit of God, inspiring these men, breathing into them great thoughts, large visions of truth, overthrew the citadel of their individuality, crushed out crude conceptions born of their age, made of them sacred but slumbering penmen. No, the human is ever quite as manifest as the divine.

Sometimes Paul feels sure that he is writing the very word of God for his children; sometimes he says frankly that he is giving his own opinion. "I have no commandment of the Lord," he writes to the Corinthians, "but I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful;" sometimes he thinks he has the Divine approval, but is not sure—"I think also that I have the Spirit of God," he says in the same letter. Again Paul says frankly that he knows in part, prophesies in part, sees through a glass darkly. He says of Peter, another of the apostolic writers, that he dissembled, and walked not according to the truth of the gospel; and Peter says of Paul that he sometimes writes things hard to understand which ignorant men have twisted to their own destruction, a verdict with which many a modern admirer of Paul inclines to sympathize. No effort is made by the various writers to harmonize their accounts in detail; there has been no saying, Let us be careful that we all say this and that; strong evidence this of their perfect frankness and truthfulness. Just as no two biographers of St. Francis give alike the names of the

friends who accompanied him to Rome on his great mission to the Pope; just as no two expert reporters report a great event in just the same way or agree perfectly in their statement of facts; so these biographers and historians of early ages tell their story each from his own point of view as he understands and emphasizes the facts. The conception of a Bible in its every detail infallible—the great misfortune of Protestantism, which opened the way for such fiascoes as Ingersoll's "Mistakes of Moses," and for so much misunderstanding of a higher order—was born of an apparent historical necessity at the time of the Reformation. To the man who asked, "What is truth?" was ever ready the answer, "Ask the church; the Pope, the vicegerent of God, cannot err." Now this was changed. But men still craved an infallible authority, and so, in place of an infallible church, they put an infallible book, forgetful that God makes his approach directly to each individual soul, and that each soul may come directly to him. As a result, men eager to champion the sacred book have bent backward in their devotion, and assumed that opening it at random one could find

an infallible guide in every experience of life. When vaccination was first introduced in New England, a sermon in opposition to it by one Mussey of London was widely circulated; its text was, "So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown"; its argument, that Satan was the first inoculator. So wise a man as John Wesley twice tried to find guidance as to a call to Bristol by a random opening of the sacred book, and when the second time the verse that fell beneath his eye was "And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even Jerusalem," he and his friends, for reasons which his biographers do not explain, found here a confirmation of the call to Bristol. But this is bibliolatry, not the wise use of the Scriptures which the sacred books themselves commend. Paul loved the Scriptures, nourished his soul upon them, but he quotes from them in a way that indicates either a careless memory, or the use of a version not now known, or more probably an emphasis upon the spirit rather than the letter of the ancient books. Matthew (27 : 9) ascribes to Jeremiah

a record which is found only in the book of the prophet Zechariah. The mind of Jesus was saturated with the great writings of his race; but unhesitatingly he puts himself far above them, saying "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of olden time . . . but I say unto you," and again to the advocates of a literal interpretation of every word of the ancient law, "Ye search the Scriptures because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me that ye might have life." The true place of the Scriptures in the life of the Christian is proclaimed by Paul in a familiar passage, "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." That is to say, their mission is educational, corrective, inspirational; their great relation to the life of man, that he may be wise in thought and strong for service. They are "able to make thee wise unto salvation"—in themselves?—no, "through faith which is in Christ Jesus." "The word was never made verses,"

well says an old Scotch minister of the last century; "it was made flesh." "No other paper," says Phillips Brooks, "is fit to hold that awful writing."

But now it may be asked, if the Bible is not, in its every detail, infallible, if its conception of the material universe is outgrown, and its morals at times primitive to say the least, why read the Bible to-day? Is not God still revealing himself to the spirits of men? Are there not still prophets inspired of God to proclaim his will? And the answer of course is, that revelation and inspiration have not ceased; to every age God is speaking as he spoke to the prophets of old. But the Bible is not superseded. For these reasons it has, and will always have, a unique place in the life of men:

(1) It is the inspired record—inspired because in this wonderfully natural way men were guided of God to do things far larger than they conceived—of the great revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The Old Testament, in ways the men who wrote it never dreamed, is the record of the progressive preparation of the world for his coming; to him as with an index finger it ever

points; in the New in the fulness of the times he stands before us, lives his life of love, speaks his wondrous words, is crucified and risen; in the New, too, we see the influence of his life and words and death and resurrection upon the men who were nearest to him, the small beginnings of the Kingdom that, slowly coming even yet, is destined everywhere to triumph. The permanence of the Bible is the permanence of him into whose presence it leads; as there can never be a greater and more satisfying revelation of God than the love of Christ, so there can never be a greater record of that revelation than the Bible.

(2) The Bible is unique in all the literature of the ages because of its wonderful adaptation and appeal to the needs of all sorts of men in every age. Outgrown in science, product of a primitive age, unlike all other books it never grows old. It speaks ever out of the experience of yesterday, to the needs of to-day, and the longings of to-morrow. And the reason for this perennial freshness is that the themes with which it deals, and the impulses it aims to kindle, are the same in every time in every clime. As Bishop Butler said long ago, it gives us an ac-

count of the world in this one single view as God's world; it lays bare the corruption of the human heart, the self-deceit of its motives, the sure disappointment of its selfish efforts, until he who reads cries with Judas, "Lord, is it I?"; it utters as does no other book the perennial yearning of the longing soul after God and immortality, crying with the troubled spirits of every age, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" It is the great storehouse of religious experience, the exhaustless reservoir of religious aspiration. As Coleridge said of it so tersely, "It finds me."

(3) The Bible is unique in literature in that it is the great channel of present revelation and inspiration. As ever, God works by natural methods. He seeks the man who seeks him. He reveals himself to the inquiring soul. Many a man has found that the days when, for one reason or another, the Bible was largely a closed book, were the days of dimness of vision and languor of impulse, the days of doubt and discouragement; and that, on the other hand, the days when, not understanding fully its message, often perplexed and troubled, not understanding

God and his own heart, he yet sought earnestly to nourish his soul upon the words of Psalmist and prophet, most of all upon the blessed words of the Master, these were the days of new illumination and confidence, the days he was strong to persist and patient to endure. As with life itself, the richest treasures of the Bible are not upon the surface. He who brings to it the most gets from it the most. He finds that systematic and prayerful study brings to him often the experience of which Thomas Fuller, one of the wise men of the seventeenth century, spoke, "Lord, this morning I read a chapter in the Bible, and therein observed a memorable passage, whereof I never took notice before. Why now, and no sooner, did I see it? Formerly my eyes were as open, and the letters as legible. Is there not a thin veil laid over thy Word, which is more rarefied by reading, and at last wholly worn away? I see the oil of thy word will never leave increasing whilst any bring an empty barrel."

The recognition of the Bible as the great channel of present revelation and inspiration, suggests a satisfying answer to the perplexing

question as to the ultimate source of authority in the Christian life. If the infallibility of the book is set aside, as was the infallibility of the church, where to-day are men to look for an infallible authority? The answer is that the word of God, uttered once perfectly in the mind and word and work of Jesus Christ, is the one infallible authority. But how are men to know with unerring accuracy the word of God thus expressed? The answer of Roman Catholicism is partially right; the church through its history more than through its decisions and dicta interprets to men the Divine mind. The answer of historic Protestantism is partially right, marking a great forward step; in its spiritual leadership the Bible is infallible, the man who opens wide his heart to its teaching will inevitably be led ever more perfectly into the way, the truth and the life. The answer of modern criticism is partially right, marking another forward step; the word of God vocal in the soul of man is the final authority; no external authority is valid and vital until it is confirmed and attested within. And yet all these answers are partial. The forgotten truth in them is that *an*

infallible authority can only reveal itself completely to, can only utter itself fully through, an infallible life. This is the testimony of Scripture: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And this is the testimony of experience; it explains the puzzling fact that the word of God vocal in the souls of earnest men seems often to speak with so many clashing tongues. In this school of life God's revelation to the individual as to the world is, and must be, a progressive revelation, dependent upon the growth of the man's soul; always for the seed of truth there must be the soil of faith and love. And commonly his method is to reveal truth not in a flash, but in the friction through the years of opposing half-truths. Wherever there is a double allegiance, part for God and part for self, the vision of truth will be blurred; wherever there is cherished prejudice, there will be narrowness of view and false emphasis; where but one phase of truth is seen, the sense of proportion will be lost. But where there is a docile mind, a humble spirit, a pure heart, a surrendered will, a life responsive to the lessons of history and

nourished constantly upon the sacred Scriptures, such a man will grow up increasingly into the mind of Christ; more and more the word of God will be vocal and vital in his soul. The great word of Jesus to the man who is seeking an infallible authority is this, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

VII

THE SENSE OF SIN IN MODERN LIFE

THE decay of the sense of sin in our generation has often been noted. "The higher man of to-day," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "is not worrying about his sins at all, still less about their punishment; his mission, if he is good for anything, is to be up and doing." "There is no virtue in thinking upon sin," says Dr. George Albert Coe, "or in emotional experience with respect to it, except as these are merely reverse aspects of aggressive fighting, or of industrious work upon the eternal temple." * Compare this with Paul's consciousness of sin—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief"; or with the self-estimate of Bernard of Clairvaux, whose life was one of habitual self-denial and beautiful devotion to the Christian ideal, "When I look at myself, I find myself oppressed with such a burden of sin that no other hope of salvation is left me save in the mercy of Christ alone"; or with the confession

*"The Religion of a Mature Mind," p. 392.

of Samuel Rutherford, "The world hath sadly mistaken me; no man knoweth what guiltiness is in me; I am a wretched captive of sin"; or with the saying of Tholuck, addressing a gathering of his students and of the learned men of Germany assembled to do him honor on the fiftieth anniversary of his professorate in the University of Halle, "The one thing for which I have most to thank God is the conviction of sin."

To-day men seldom talk in this latter way. True, most of us have bad half-hours with ourselves when we realize what fools we have been. We are keenly conscious of limitation and imperfection, but the sense that we are downright sinners somehow escapes the average man of our time. He is distinctly respectable, certainly as good as his neighbor. "I do about as nearly right as I know how," is the self-satisfied verdict repeatedly given by men to whom the claims of Christianity are presented. The sense of sin seems to be gone.

The change is sometimes ascribed to the world's progress. Fortunately the moral standards of the sixteenth century are outgrown. But there is still coarseness and vulgarity enough to

give the common conscience of humanity many a restless night. Vice may be more refined, but it is not less vicious. If in some things we have outgrown our fathers, in others they would be heartily ashamed of us.

The modern emphasis on culture is sometimes supposed to account largely for the change. Many people are not rascals mainly because they are not fools. Men are finding out that it is much more comfortable and hygienic to live in a pure, healthy body, than in one tainted and weakened by self-indulgence; that a mind which habitually thinks broad, kindly, hopeful thoughts is a much more pleasant travelling companion than one which habitually thinks petty, envious, resentful, selfish thoughts; that a life of self-control dominated daily by a sovereign will and a sublime purpose is infinitely more satisfying than a life tossed by every sudden squall. But of genuine culture the usual effect is to open a man's eyes to summits of attainment unseen before; to reveal to him the vastness of the chasm between the man he is and the man he should be. True culture deepens rather than weakens the sense of sin.

By others the change is laid to the purer religious thinking of our time. Fear, we are told, was the characteristic word of the religious thinking of our fathers; to-day love is the word that goes to the heart of our teaching. This is nearer the truth; of the contrast suggested more will shortly be said. Yet who can believe that fear was the impelling motive of the devout souls of generations past, of Paul, of Bernard, of our own sainted fathers?

The source of the change lies deeper. With multitudes of men the lost sense of sin follows the lost sense of God. Recognition of responsibility to God, and of the infinite meaning of a human life, have disappeared from their horizon, and with these has gone of course the sense of sin. Restore the old-fashioned virtues—reverence, humility, conscious dependence upon God, daily loyalty to Christ—and the sense of sin will quickly return. Others misconceive wholly the nature of sin. They confuse sin with sins. Sin fundamentally is not an act, it is an attitude. It is the chasm of motive and effort which separates my thought and life from the thought and life of God. Reputable men

who habitually think of sin as drunkenness, or impurity, or profanity, or theft, will naturally experience a decay of the sense of sin.

But is this the last word upon the subject? Is there really everywhere in the deepest things of the spirit a backward movement? Are our best men worse than their fathers? Is there not rather possessing the minds, and animating the hearts, and impelling the consciences of multitudes of men to-day a new sense of sin, less clearly defined, perhaps, but more real, vital and truly Christian than the old. I believe confidently that there is. It is a safe rule that there is no virtue in a thing simply because it used to be. On the contrary, if it used to be, and is not, it is well commonly to inquire whether there is not some good reason for the change. For to believe that the world is going backward is to lose the dominant note of Christian faith. Are there not some things about the old sense of sin, beautiful, humbling, creative, as it often was, which the world has well outgrown, losing which in the growth of its better thought it has in the natural motion of the human pendulum swung to the other extreme and for the time

lost also much of the good? If I mistake not, there are.

For instance, the old sense of sin was often more a theological inheritance than a practical experience. The burden of Adam's sin was upon men. A racial taint, hopeless, cruel, pursued them. To-day, too flippantly perhaps, men are disposed to let Adam take care of himself. In the mind of the average Christian, practical experience precedes, tests, controls, every theological tenet; is this true? means not, has some one said this long ago? but, do men know it to-day in the battle-ground of the soul? Original sin is not denied; it is lost to view in the pressure of present conflict. The problem of origins has not lost its interest, but its precedence. Sin is not less real, but it is a great grim fact to be bravely met, not an insoluble mystery to be quarrelled about.

Again, the old sense of sin was apt to be morbidly introspective. Habitually it looked within. It dissected motives, longings, affections; it fed upon self-analysis; it revealed itself in moods. Under its influence good men doubted their own salvation, and were driven to despair.

How they suffered, these pure, sensitive spirits of old! Pascal, sick, nerve-racked, wondered if his affection for his sister, who had nursed him through a long illness, was not sinful. One day he wrote in his diary, "God forgive me for loving my dear sister so much." Afterward he drew his pen through the word "dear." To-day self-analysis has its place in the Christian life, but it is a minor place. Outward, onward, upward is the Christian's look. God is not a jealout taskmaster, but a loving Father, not a rival of human affections but their source, their inspiration, their very life. The saving of one's own soul is no longer possible as the ruling thought of the Christian mind; as Job's captivity was turned when he thought of his friends, so often the redeeming process, the "being saved" of Scripture, gains reality only when a man's thought and effort go forth to others that they may be brought to their true selves and to God. To be selfishly saved is to be lost.

Once more, the old sense of sin was apt to look backward rather than forward. It mourned over the past. It dwelt upon failures. The new sense of sin is the response to a voice which

says: "Behold, I set before thee an open door"; it has learned Phillips Brooks's message that a man has nothing to do with his past save to get a future out of it. Saddened by yesterday's experience, it is also strengthened by it; and its face is toward the light. It is illumined by a clearer vision of the Fatherhood of God. A son, rebellious, wayward, eager for his own way, leaves his father's home. By and by, coming to himself, he comes again to his home, cries: "I am no more worthy to be called your son; make me as a hired servant." The father requires of him no painful penance, no morbid moping over the bitter past; to the boy's bleeding heart goes forth the father's healing, reviving touch, he kills the fatted calf, calls in the neighbors to welcome him home. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ requires of his children no unhealthy lamentation over the past, but only that confessing humbly our wrongdoing, learning watchfully its hard lessons, we go on in their light to the better sonship of the days to come. In the true Christian life there is never any time for mere morbid regrets. The more wasted time in the past, the less time to waste to-day.

Once more, the old sense of sin saw mainly things done; the new and better sense of sin sees mainly things undone. Its heartbreak is the gulf between the ideal and the real, the things purposed and the things achieved. It is active rather than meditative, less a review of the feelings than a survey of the field.

And so the new sense of sin, already, if I mistake not, keenly felt in the lives of Christian men and women to-day, and destined to be felt ever more creatively as the kingship of Christ gains ascendency in the hearts of men, has these three kindred characteristics:

(1) It is social no less than it is personal. The personal is not lost to view; it cannot be; for sin seen to its heart is the absence of a personal relation. But that of which men are conscious in these days as never before is a broadening of the personal relation. As Gregory, hearing of a poor man's death by starvation in Rome, felt himself to blame, and scourged and denied himself for his sin, so the Christian of to-day who, in faintest degree, has caught the spirit of his Master, cannot separate himself from the sin, the sorrow, the struggle, the ignorance of his race,

feels them as though they were his own, knows his life to be a failure until it is going forth to meet them. Wherever poverty, oppression and selfishness are blighting human lives, wherever manhood is missing its meaning and weakness is sinking in the mire, there the Christian feels within him a burning of shame and a passion to help; it is the new sense of sin. New? It was the sense of sin which the Hebrew prophets felt. Remember Amos: "I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins"—what are they? "They afflict the just, they take a bribe, they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right." "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, that lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flocks, that drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph." Micah is "full of power by the Spirit of the Lord to declare unto Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin," and what does he say? "Hear this, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor justice and pervert all equity; the heads thereof

judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money"—the grasping and the "graft" of the age have aroused in the prophet the sense of sin. "Cease to do evil, learn to do well," cried Isaiah, but how? "Seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow; come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." And what were the sins to which Christ was most sensitive? They have been well classified in this way: sins of the thought—envy, uncharitable judgment, evil desire; sins of Pharisaism—the pious tongue, and the proud, selfish, contemptuous life; sins against the little ones, the young, the sick in body or in mind, the weak in achievement or in will. All of them are sins that touch some other life. Himself sinless, the Master had as few have had, the sense of sin; it was the burden of the cross, the pang that made him cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

(2) The new sense of sin is closely related to

the advancing kingdom of God. This was the reason Jesus gave for calling on men to give up their sin and selfishness; "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Christ seldom spoke to men of the wickedness of that which they were doing, but of the greatness and beauty of that which they were missing. Change your minds, he seems to say, about the real prizes and pleasures of life, get into line with the things that count, for God's day is coming, slowly but surely his triumphant will is advancing to victory. To think what God is doing here on earth—making men in his own image, bringing forth a universal kingdom, of which righteousness and truth and peace shall be the atmosphere, in which all men shall be brothers under one great Father—to think what God is doing, and then to think what most of us are doing; to think earnestly the thoughts of God after him for the men and women around us, and then to think our own: this is to feel the new sense of sin, and it stings and rebukes and renews as the mopings of monks and the scourgings of ascetics could never do in this age.

(3) The new sense of sin is tested and quick-

ened or quieted by the law and the life of love. To know oneself a sinner in these days it is not well to dwell too long upon the Ten Commandments, lest in blindness to their larger meanings we be like the royal duke whose audible response to each of them was "Never did that." The enormity of sin in modern life is better brought home in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians and the first Epistle general of John. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." When a man brings the thoughts of his heart and the efforts of his life to a test like that, better still when he brings them to the test of the mind and the life and the cross of Christ, he will be ready to join with new and redeeming meaning in the old confession: "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way."

VIII

THE GREAT GOSPEL OF THE CROSS

NOWHERE must the two keynotes of a strong working theology be borne more earnestly in mind than in any attempt to discuss this supreme theme. Reverence saves from the contradiction of defining the infinite; reality puts the emphasis upon those phases of truth which touch the springs of life and are pregnant with redeeming power.

Through the ages controversies about the cross have been largely speculative and scholastic. Many minute theories as to the effect of the Saviour's death have been confidently advanced. It was a ransom paid to the devil, or a price exacted by Infinite Justice, or an exhibition of Divine Love. The natural reaction has been the modern mood which, accepting the fact of the Saviour's atoning death for men, confesses frankly that it has no theory to offer. This is the position of multitudes of earnest men today. But there is manifest in our time an impatience with this position. Some theory, we

are told, must go with a fact, or the fact is vague and impotent. What is the fact about which we have no theory? Is it that the cross saves—how, we know not? But what do we mean by the cross? The wood on which the Master hung? Or the actual blood that was shed on the cross? Or his voluntary self-consecration to the will of the Father? Or his identification with human sin and suffering? And what do we mean by being saved? Through the cross is a man saved from past sin? From the power of sin? From the effects of sin? From the punishment of sin here and hereafter? These questions concern the fact, not the theory, of redemption; the "what," not the "how." This is the discussion which is waxing warm just now in England, where men who answer in one way are ruling out of the faith men who answer in another. In our own land similar questions are being asked. The prevalent mood is one of great uncertainty. Devout souls, incarnating in their own lives something of the spirit of Jesus, accepting gratefully the gospel of the cross, are earnestly seeking clearer thought about its meaning.

Now all such discussion, when reverent in spirit, is to be welcomed as a healthful symptom of the search for reality in our time. Men are resolved to be delivered from the tyranny of well-worn phrases through which the edge of truth is often dulled; by them they will no longer be driven into the kingdom. The most sacred words, the cross, the atonement, the blood of Christ, must continue to reveal truth that illumines the mind, and warms the heart, and transforms the life, or pass from the speech of men. A transaction which squares accounts with the Infinite, but effects no change in the individual, is a contradiction which will not appeal to this age. I know a man, in earlier years devoted in Christian service, who has long abandoned all outward expressions of the life he once held dear. He no longer attends church; from his home all forms of reverence have vanished; he yields frequently to the sins of the flesh. Yet he writes: "My life is nearly over; I am trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ my Saviour." One realizes of course the imperfection of all human judgments; and yet the indications are strong that for this man the

"finished work" is not merely an empty phrase, a spiritual catchword, but a great peril of the soul. For always real and redeeming is the work of Christ in a life.

May it not be frankly and helpfully recognized that the gospel of the cross is larger, broader, more spiritual than any human conception of it, and makes its appeal in varied ways to men of varied thought and experience? The teaching of Jesus was always adapted to the needs of the individuals to whom he was speaking; to-day there is no mould save the heart of need through which it must pass. The fact of the atonement, the greatest of all facts, is that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; to this sublime statement of the fact nothing need ever be added. Every theory of the fact, as to how God was in Christ, as to how reconciliation was or is effected, as to the relative value of his life, his words, his death, is, comparatively, of minor importance; the eternal destinies of a soul will never depend upon his grasping of an intellectual proposition, or his fathoming the relations of the infinite God and his Christ. Yet every theory helps which

makes vivid even to a single man the fact; when through it reconciliation with God in Christ becomes real and creative, every such theory has surely caught some fringe of the garment of Christ; it is false and presumptuous only when it assumes to express perfectly the thoughts that are not as our thoughts and the ways that are not as our ways.

The man, for instance, whose life is stained with the blighting memory of sin and shame, upon whose soul lies heavily the bitter weight of years misspent, of lives ruined, of wrongs that never can be righted, rejoices to see in the death of the Divine Master, sent into the world by the Father, going freely to the cross for men, the pledge of sin forgiven. At the cross his burden falls away; the loving Christ has taken it from him; he feels sure that even for him the way is forever open to the Father. No man who knows the sin-stained human heart will doubt that the gospel for this age must have in it clear and strong the note of forgiveness. The peril of the man whose thought of the cross concentrates upon the forgiveness of sin is that, saying, as a man in jail writes to me, "My hope

is now that Christ died for me, and therefore I can enter into life eternal," he may rest at this point. But if a genuine love for his Saviour has been kindled in his heart, he cannot rest there. Forgiveness will mean to him, not a clean sheet, but an open door. His life will be reconciled with God in Christ.

Another has lived a life outwardly clean and correct. His experience has been the gradual unfolding of the powers within him, a deepening desire to know the larger meanings of his life as they are revealed in Christ, and enter into them. Such a man is less impressed by the thought of substitution in the work of Christ than by that of identification; to him the gospel of the cross is that Divine Love has made the race struggle his own, identified himself with human need to the limit of sacrificial love. His great joy is not that Christ has borne his sin, but called him to be a sharer in his great world-burden. Beneath the shadow of the cross, he has passed from anxiety about personal salvation, and speculation about theories of representation, to the loving labors of the Christ. The cross is to him an impulse more than a refuge.

If his spirit be humble, and his dependence upon Divine strength deep and constant, may we not believe that some part of the truth which is so much greater than his faint gropings after it, possesses his soul, and is making him free?

Another emphasizes the sacramental view. He thinks of Christ's work as in him rather than for him. In his own strength he must fail. The very life of Christ must be given to him, if he is to win his battle and live a truly Christian life. But ere Christ's life can be given to men it must be poured forth; on the cross he beholds it freely given for men; the Lord's supper, recalling his death, is the perpetual pledge that it is his who sincerely hungers for the bread of life. There are both mysticism and symbolism here to which some minds do not quickly respond; but there is also the very heart of Christian faith and experience. We can never emphasize overmuch the fact that if there is to be life achieved there must be life received. The gospel of the cross is preëminently a gospel of power.

Yet another cannot separate in his thought the death of Christ from his life and his words. To him the incarnation, the entrance of God

in Christ into human life, is the beginning of the cross. He does not depreciate Calvary; he extends and prolongs it immeasurably. But he cannot think of the cross as a single event in time; to him it is an age-long sacrifice, not a momentary surrender, a divine life-work, not an infinite transaction. He speaks of the atoning life more than of the atoning death. To him it seems that Christ is still being borne to the cross; the thought of Sigismund Goetze's great picture, possesses his soul; he seems to see the Master being crucified afresh not only on the steps of St. Paul's cathedral to-day (as the picture suggests), but wherever men are deaf to his appeals, false to their true selves and their fellows, blind to the rich meanings of their lives. His soul responds to the pathetic cry of the Divine sufferer, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" All this may be very vague; it may not always put the emphasis where it has commonly been put; but if it arouse in this man a great love and loyalty, who shall say that the gospel of the cross has not entered with reconciling power his soul?

To very many, baffled, burdened souls, the

great gospel of the cross is that it illumines as does nothing else the dark mystery of life. He to whom was given the wondrous testimony, "This is my beloved Son," the sinless, perfect Son, suffers to the very limit of human suffering and loneliness and wrong, crying in anguish, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass"; in loneliness, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Not only does he suffer, he submits; bravely, patiently, without a rebellious word, he treads the wine-press alone, saying at the last in perfect surrender, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The cross was in his life who did perfectly the Father's will; no wonder it should be in ours. "I have suffered a good deal of pain," said a workingman on a sick-bed to me, "but not half what my Saviour suffered for me." What a gospel is here!

So one might go on indefinitely. All human theories are partial and inadequate, relics, some of them, of Jewish ritual, and Roman law, and pagan rites, clever efforts most of them to read our little human ways into the ways of God. The theory for every man is the theory that

makes vivid to him the fact, the theory that warms his love for Christ, and quickens his impulse to serve him. There may be crude thinking, but if there is an open mind and a responsive will, the Spirit will guide him into the larger truth. But there must be no mistake about the fact. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Reconciliation involves separation, antagonism. Man self-governed is alienated from God. Sin is separation from the Infinite above and the Infinite within. The gospel of the cross is that in Jesus Christ the gulf is bridged; through him God comes to man; through him man comes to God, and to himself.

My own thought of the cross finds constant illustration and illumination in that sphere to which Jesus so often pointed men, the home. A father's heart is rent by the sin and disobedience of his son. What is the longing of the father's heart toward his boy? The first burst of resentment over, the father-love speaks. He would forgive the boy freely, fully. But forgiveness without change of mind and heart on the son's part achieves nothing but the mastery of

the father's spirit; its probable issue is indifference and contempt and continued sin. And so he must show his son his sin; in some way the boy must see it as it is. Moreover, he must bear with his son the effects of his sin; whatever the boy has to suffer, he, too, for the love he bears him, must suffer with him. Above all, he must save his son from his sin, so that it shall never stain his life again.

All this, I am sure, and much more of love, there is in the great gospel of the cross. The best in man is far beneath the least in God. In the words of the old collect, it is his nature and property to forgive. There is no obstacle to forgiveness on God's side; no necessity of his nature to satisfy by a divine sacrifice; on God's side the only necessity is the necessity of love. The only obstacle to free forgiveness is on man's side. Forgiveness that is simply the erasing of a record is weak and ineffective; soon man writes another fouler still. Man must see his sin as it is and turn from it. The cross, the crowning revelation of God's love, is also the great revelation of man's sin. This is where it leads; this is

what it costs; the rending of the Divine Sufferer's heart, the betrayal and crucifixion of purity and love by selfishness and hate. But the cross is no mere exhibition of love suffering for sin, no spectacular display of divine emotion. It is all intensely real. Because he loves us, God bears with us the effects of our sin. In the cross the Divine Spirit regnant in Christ entered into the sins and struggles and sorrows of men, bore them as a mother bears the burden of her child. All this he does to save; this is the great end of sacrificial love. And how does the cross save? In the home the process is easy to trace. Touched by his father's sorrow, seeing in its true light his sin, what it costs, where it leads, won by the love that shares with him its penalty, the boy comes to himself, turns from his sin, henceforth rejoices to take his father's way, not his own. Just this it is to be saved. Wherever kneeling at the cross, won by the love of the Father who sent, or the love of the Divine Saviour who came, a man sees his sin as it is, where it leads, what it costs, comes to himself, dethrones the baffled schemes of self, enthrones the love and the will of Christ, he is saved. No longer a

rebel, a malcontent, he is henceforth a son, a humble learner of Christ, a glad co-worker in the toils of God and the burdens of the Saviour. He has taken his rightful place in the great scheme of things; henceforth the resources of the universe are his; the stars in their courses fight for him. Delivered from the tyranny of self, a free captive of a loving Master, naturalized into the kingdom of Christ, he is reconciled with God, and to him is given the ministry of reconciliation. He goes forth an apostle of the cross, his message this, "Whosoever wills to lose his life for Christ's sake shall find it."

IX

THINGS TO COME

THE doctrine of the future in a working theology is concerned mainly with this afternoon and to-morrow. It has not two gospels, one for time and one for eternity, but one for the eternity which is now. Its great guide and inspiration is the priceless word of the Master, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," and "He that believeth on me *hath* everlasting life." The moment of Christlikeness is the moment of deathless life.

The great words of the gospel are these two, life and death, and we are false to the Master when, charmed by the glory of the one, we forget the dread reality of the other. The more one reads of the sacred book, or learns of the cruelties in nature; when one reflects that of the thousand million species of animals and plants which now tenant this earth not one in 100,000 individuals ever reaches maturity; when horror after horror sends a chill to the heart, and he that sitteth in the heavens is silent; the

more the conviction is likely to grow that in all the strange discipline and tragedy of life God is teaching his children the cheapness, the nothingness of life as men commonly conceive it, the life of sleeping and waking, of hungering and feeding, of making and spending, the life of the senses and the appetites—it is the cheapest thing in the universe. But ever with this God is teaching us the other lesson—and of it every Christian is the herald—the priceless value of life as God conceives it, the life of finding by losing, of getting by giving, of having by doing, the life which is the harmonious play of all the powers to highest ends intent, the very life of God in the soul of man. The cross on Calvary, on which One brought near to us as the only begotten Son of God gives his life for men, is the divine estimate of the infinite and eternal value of life like this. And so this is our gospel, "He that hath the Son,"—he in whom the love of the Father has awakened the loyalty of the Son—"hath life": that life in which death shall be a mere incident issuing in fairer forms and larger toils beyond. "He that hath not the Son hath not life."

The full content of life or of death hereafter

Jesus has not told us. Doubtless the veiled future is part of the kindness and the wisdom of this scheme of things. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard"—we would not understand it if we knew. There are, indeed, many unanswered questions, and they weigh heavily at times on the minds of thoughtful men. There are earnest Christians who expect the Master to return very soon and reign upon this earth; the prophetic Scriptures seem to them to make this clear. There are others who believe that in the Spirit the rich promises of another coming have already been fulfilled; their interpretation is more spiritual and to them more helpful; they are nearer to Paul when he says, "To me to live is Christ," or "Christ in you, the hope of glory," than when he says, "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds." Men ask: where is heaven? what shall we do there? shall we know our loved ones again? must not a loving and omnipotent God triumph at last in every soul he has created? will not all punishment prove remedial? how could a mother live in bliss while her son suffered or was lost?

A wise working theology leaves these questions, and many others, trustfully in the hands of Him who doeth all things well. It emphasizes the Master's own words "Watch, and pray"; be ready for whatever God's plan for you may any day reveal. It balances the larger hope, the apparent logic that an omnipotent God who is Love must triumph at last in every life, by the tender Saviour's emphasis upon the great alternatives, his pictures of the offal heap into which the city's refuse was cast and the great gulf fixed, his word of the tree that bore no fruit, "Cut it down," of the man who made nothing of his talent, "Give it to him that hath ten." It feels the clear words of the Master to be a far better basis for the business of living than the vague hope that somehow everything will turn out right at the last. It recalls that love is not a pretty sentiment, a weak emotion, love is the most compelling force in the universe; love is tender, but also love is stern; love seeks, but also love shuns; love is passionate, persuasive, but also love is pure. May there not be beyond tremendous spiritual realities, to us as we think of them sadly blighting, which God in his

wisdom and love will see to be wholly good? Perhaps no wiser words have been written on the problems of destiny than those of the tender Whittier:

> "Forever round the mercy-seat,
> The guiding lights of love shall burn;
> But what if, habit-bound, thy feet
> Shall lack the will to turn?
> What if thine eye refuse to see
> Thine ear of heaven's free welcome fail,
> And thou a willing captive be
> Thyself thine own dark jail?
> O doom beyond the saddest guess,
> As the long years of God unroll,
> To make thy dreary selfishness
> The prison of a soul."

But there will be no shadow upon the bliss of those who enter at last into the fulness of life beyond. If there be a contradiction here, God holds the key, and his secret, we may be sure, is far better than the loftiest of man's groping.

In a working theology the great question for every man is not, Is there a future life? what sort of life will it be? but, Is there anything in my life that is worth a future, anything which an Infinite God who has the business of a uni-

verse on hand—the making of men, the defeat of sin and selfishness, the establishment of a universal spiritual kingdom of righteousness and peace and truth—can reasonably be expected to continue to all eternity? In a word, what is there in me of the things that are unseen and eternal, the fabric of which through the ages God is building his spiritual universe.

From the vagueness and uncertainty of the future there is but one sure refuge; it is to be found in a life of love and loyalty, sincere and thoroughgoing, to the great Master who even here leads us to heavenly summits, and who dispels all fear of death and the mysteries beyond by his confident word, "I have the keys of hell and of death." To him, one must notice, it is all intensely personal; he does not simply say, There is a future life, but "I am the Resurrection and the Life," "I go to prepare a place for you," "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." It is an unfailing stay and strength that he, who was so selfless and so humble, who has never deceived those who have trusted him in deepest things, whose

boldest words have been so marvellously fulfilled, spoke here without the shadow of uncertainty. To him it was clear and sure; there will be enduring personality; there will be life, boundless and beautiful, reaching on to the infinitudes of God.